

That Mr. Eden succeeded Sir Samuel Hoare at the Foreign Office made no practical difference, for it was too late to save Abyssinia. We continued to profess our readiness to apply the oil embargo if other states would do the same, but the veto of France blocked the way. Laval fell, but Flandin continued his policy of sabotaging the League. The remilitarization of the Rhineland in March 1936 emphasized the desirability of avoiding a break with Italy. On May 5 Italian troops marched into the Abyssinian capital. In June Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, described the continuation of sanctions as midsummer madness, and in July they were dropped. A collision had been averted at the cost of the desertion of Abyssinia, the weakening of the League, the humiliation of England, and the creation of the Rome-Berlin axis. The vacillating treatment of the Abyssinian problem confirmed the growing opinion, not only in Germany and Italy but throughout the world, that the muscles of the post-war Englishman were becoming soft, or at any rate that post-war British statesmen had lost their nerve.

XV. THE RAPPROCHEMENT WITH ITALY, 1937-9

Italian hostility remained one of our chief preoccupations during the following years. Both parties looked round for friends. Mussolini sacrificed the independence of Austria to his need for a partner, and the Axis began to take shape when the dictators supported Franco's revolt. Our first *riposte* was the settlement of the Egyptian question. When the Protectorate proclaimed in 1914 gave way in 1922 to the recognition of Egyptian independence, we reserved four points for discussion, of which the retention of the British garrison and the continued occupation of the Sudan were the most

controversial Four fruitless attempts at agreement were made before the conquest of Abyssinia, which involved greater danger to Egypt than to England, removed the difficulties.

In August 1936 England consented to the conditional removal of British troops to the Canal zone and a *condominium* in the Sudan, and undertook to support the abolition of the Capitulations and Egypt's entry into the League.. In return we secured the right to station 10,000 men on the Canal till the Egyptian army was strong enough to defend it, and a military alliance was concluded for twenty years. For the first time since the occupation began in 1882 British troops and officials functioned with the formal consent of the Egyptian Govern-